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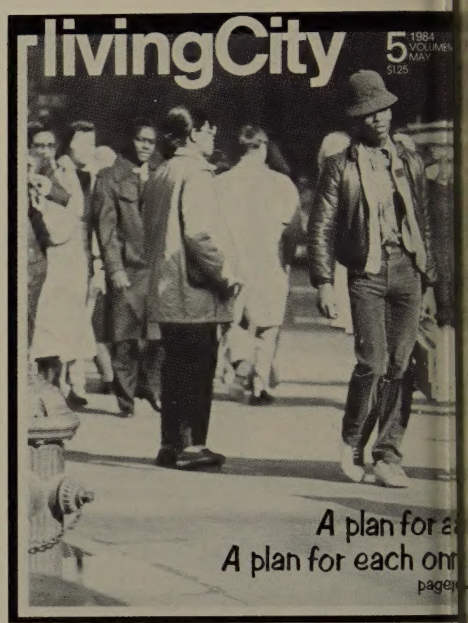

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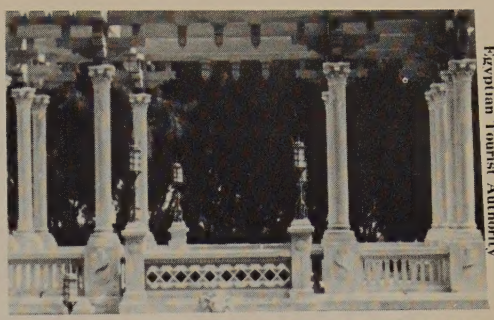

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UNITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

by CHIARA LUBICH

In this issue we are presenting the second of the talks on the spirituality of unity.

Summary of Part One:

A distinguishing characteristic of some modern ecclesial movements, one which reveals a certain preference of the Holy Spirit in our day, is the idea of unity, of communion, of community. This is true in a very particular way for the Focolare Movement. Its spirituality has in fact been defined as a "spirituality of unity."

It is centered on the priestly prayer of Jesus: "May they all be one" and helps, therefore, towards living more fully one of the most thought-provoking sentences of the New Testament.

In order to more deeply appreciate the above-mentioned spirituality, we asked ourselves if the idea of unity was already present in the Old Testament. We saw how the people of Israel, even though they knew God as their one and only God and had no notion of the Trinity, a typical revelation of the New Testament, they already had a certain concept of unity and of universality (which cannot be separated from the concept of unity) since these elements are strongly present in the very creation of the cosmos and of human beings in particular.

Today, in order to further animate our Christian spirit, which is such if it constantly aims at accomplishing unity in Christ, in order to promote in the best possible way universal fraternity (underlined recently by Pope John Paul II in his homily during the New Year's Day Mass), let us continue our study of this reality in the Old Testament.

The element of unity and universality which comes through so strongly in the story of creation is, because of its cosmic nature, found to be equally forceful in the recounting of the great flood.

When the "floodgates of the sky" and the "fountains of the abyss" poured out over the earth, the order which God had established throughout creation ran the risk of total collapse. The world which God had created by drawing it out of chaos was in danger of falling back into it.

The continuity of the existence of the created world, therefore, is not something to be taken for granted. The world could also cease to be if the Creator so decided. He is, and remains, its Lord; the destiny of the world is in his hands.

Both the beginning of the world and humanity and the end depend therefore on the work of God. Together, the story of creation and of the great flood show how humanity comes from God and, since its end is also the work of God, is constantly journeying towards him. Thus, the two stories together tell us in synthesis that the action of God is present in every reality of the history of humanity.

This one destiny of the world and mankind expresses the unity of the whole.

In the story of the creation of mankind, primitive history points out to us that, besides the relationship with God, there are other elements present in the human being. For example, the need to provide food, the need to work (the care of the garden, that is the living environment which God has given) and above all the aspect of the association, of communion with another person presented as a communion between man and woman.

"It is not good that man should be alone. I will make *a suitable helper for him*" (Gen 2:18).

This is a new creative decison of God which is similar to another: "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26).

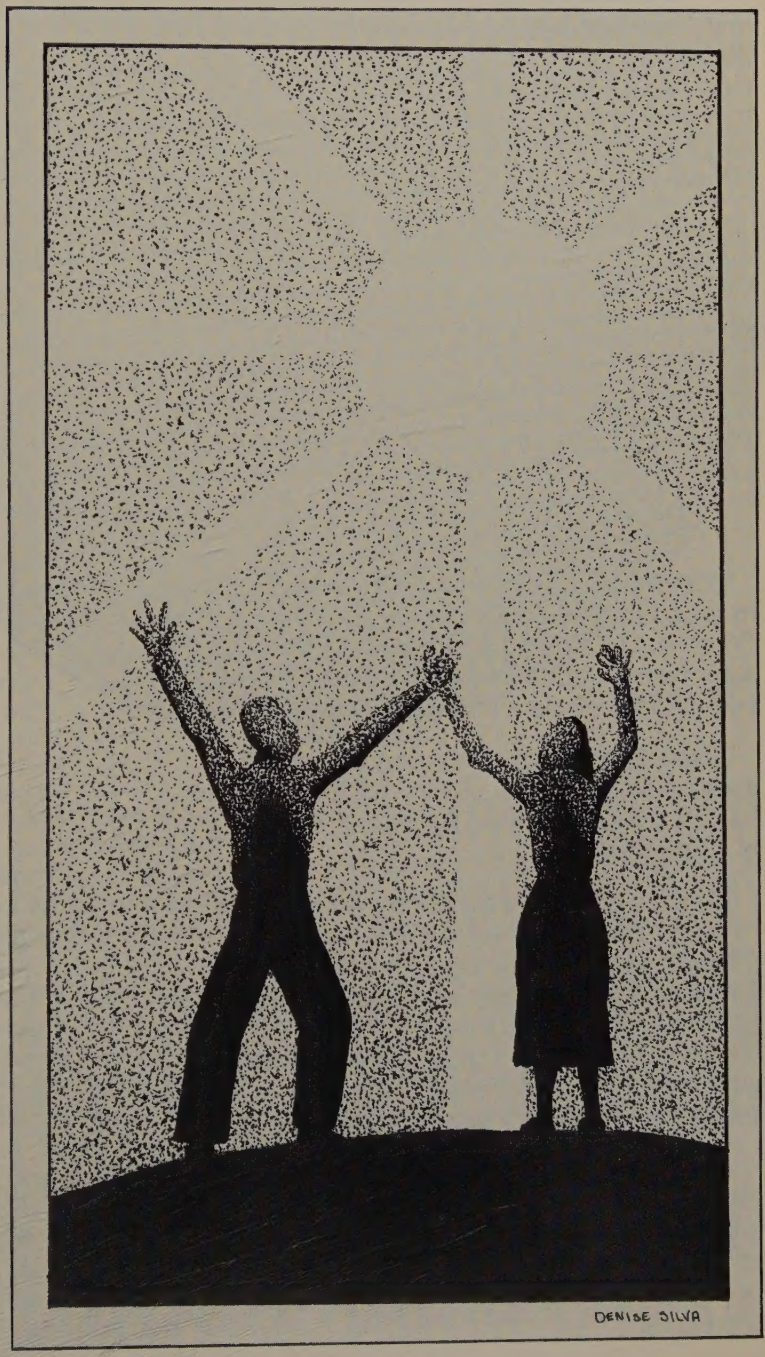
The word helper ("I will make a suitable helper...") a term which is used when referring to God (God is generally the one who helps), is used in this case to refer to the woman. The majority of translators stress that this word should not be interpreted in a unilateral sense as, for example, a helper for man in his work, or as a partner in procreation), but as a helper in a much wider sense: that is, that man cannot fulfill his design, his vocation without this mutual help.

"If the one falls," Qoheleth (or Ecclesiastes) affirms, "the other will lift up his companion. Woe to the solitary man! For if he should fall he has no one to lift him up" (4:10).

The human being, whether man or woman, is created by God in such a way that he or she needs the other's help. It is an essential part of being human.

The words "a suitable helper" ("I want to make him a suitable helper) mean a person he can relate to. Among all the creatures of creation there was no other to be such a helper. These words express the very high dignity of the human being: only another human can be a "suitable helper." In this word helper therefore, there is also expressed the relationship, mutual understanding, communion.

The German theologian Westermann has written, "In these two expressions ("helper"



and "suitable") the human community is illustrated in a marvelous way, principally that of the man and woman, inasmuch as it is the characteristic of the human being of all times" (cf. Westermann, *Genesis* BKAT, I/1, Neukirchen-Venym, p. 309s).

To be in community, in an attitude of mutual help, is therefore a fundamental element of the human being, understood here as man and woman. In fact, with the expression "It is not good that man should be alone," the Creator meant that man was not yet as he wanted him to be. It is with the creation of the woman that man becomes himself. It is with her that God brought to completion the work of the creation of man.

The unity and the universality inherent in creation are found once again, after the flood, in the figure of Noah and the three sons from whom the Bible would have all the nations of the earth descend.

There is no comparison anywhere in the ancient world to the clarity with which the sacred text describes the idea of the unity of humanity.

Next in the Old Testament we read the "Table of the Nations" which lists the nations according to their historical and political relationships, without expressing preferences or evaluations of any kind. Neither does it refer to a center towards which all the relationships converge; Israel in fact is missing from the list.

The line which began with creation flows into this universe of nations and a certain conclusion is thus reached; in the universe of nations one of the plans of the Creator is brought to fulfillment—that of filling the earth.

This positive vision of the people on earth is then followed by the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9).

All the people of the earth were united among themselves with one language when, out of a desire for greatness, fame and glory and with an expounding of their own strength, they started building a gigantic tower which would reach the sky. This fact brings them to surpass their own limits as created beings with the risk of aiming at absolute autonomy in regards to God. This would put in danger their very being as humans.

God thus intervenes to judge and, at the same time, save humanity by confusing the language. The people who had tried to maintain solidarity and consistency had not taken God into consideration and now no longer understood one another.

After the story of the Tower of Babel, Genesis passes on to speak about Abram and his call.

Here the choice of one man, Abram and his descendents, also means the "non-choice" we could say, of the others. A legitimate question might be this one: Did God abandon the other nations of the earth in their confusion?

The answer is given in the same story of Abram—"In you every nation on earth will be blessed."

Through this blessing, the prayer of Jesus "That all may be one" was already pre-announced and included, in some way, in the beginning of the story of salvation."

To be continued

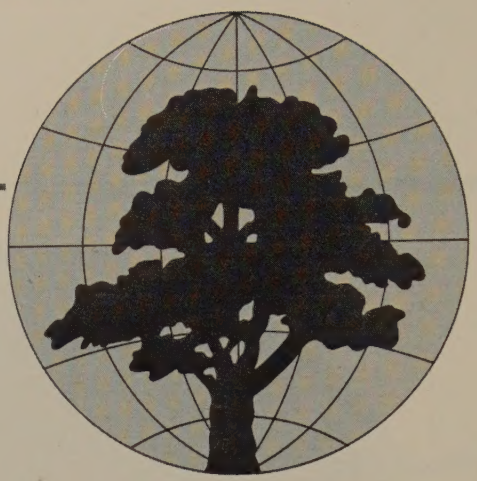
The Tree Project at work

The Tree Project which aims at "re-greening the planet" is an example of an idea which is not only extremely useful to our world but can bring people together to work in a productive way.

by Mary Cass

September 15th was almost disguised in the warmth of a mid-summer day. The piazza of the United Nations was filled with an unusual number of picnickers.

Likewise I couldn't resist taking my noon break between sessions of the Non-Governmental Conference on Youth on the stone bench overlooking the East River. My attention was suddenly drawn from the small oriental child eagerly stepping through the grass toward me to the Rose Garden at my right. It was becoming slowly populated with an international contingent, most of whom I recognized as fellow participants in the Conference. There was a large number of youth and several recognizable personalities in Government. Broadway star Cicely Tyson arrived and shortly behind her Mrs. Sally Swing Shelly, Chief of the Non-Governmental Section of the United Nations, interestingly enough followed by others carrying a small, non-identifiable tree. People gathered ceremoniously in a circle around the tree and before the signal was given to begin what was an obvious symbolic start to a new UN in-



Emblem of the Tree Project.

itiative, I decided to join the group and learn more. The ceremony had the same simple format of many tree planting ceremonies I had attended before; what was new, as I had imagined, was that it was the catalyst for what was hoped to become much more far-reaching in scope than the Rose Garden of the United Nations.

"The Tree Project," as it had been simply defined by its originators has now been officially launched. I was curious: why trees ... why a project ... why in the setting of an international community? As one of the principle promoters of the project, there was no better person to be approached for these and other answers than Mrs. Shelly.

In her characteristic personal manner, Sally Shelly greeted me warmly in her small office overlooking the East River, her headquarters as Chief of the NGO Section of the Department of Public Information at the United Nations.

"I have been in this job now for almost ten years and I'll be 'graduating' from the UN probably this year ... into a new position. What I am now doing is very interesting because we have outreached to people all over the world through religious organizations, professional organizations, environmental groups, groups interested in the handicapped, children and so on. We now have 430 organizations associated with the Department of Public Information who have an outreach to 1.5 billion people in the world. This means that we have a sphere of influence in trade unions, women groups, and almost all religious groups.

"You asked me how did I begin to formulate this idea of the "Tree Project?" Well I thought to myself one day, what kind of project could we do that would make this world a significantly better place to live in, with everybody working together. There were really two ideas that came to mind: one was to change the world in a way that we could visibly *see* the change; and the other was to bring people to work together for a common goal. I felt that if you could do something very concrete together, rather than in separate groups, this would create a climate in which we could later work together in vaster, bigger areas. Thus I was looking around; then it came to me that the world has lost half of its forests since 1950."

With this, Mrs. Shelly passed me one of the Project's brochures with a striking cover page that put sufficient stress on her last statement: their emblem—a silhouette of a large green tree on the earth's globe—underneath of which it is written, "While you are reading these words, three hectares or over seven acres of the world's forests will disappear."

"You know a lot of publications," Mrs. Shelly began telling me as she leaned forward, "have shown that one of the five most serious projections into the future, indicating serious future problems, is the 'greenhouse effect.' This is caused by the increased carbon dioxide content in the atmosphere which will eventually result in the heating of the planet before the year 2000. An ultimate consequence of this will be the melting of the ice caps, putting all of our port cities, which means most of the world's largest cities—New York City included—under eight feet of water. I wanted to find a way to combat this, a non-controversial way (my whole idea was to get people to work together on something that was not controversial), and what better way than a major tree-planting effort.

"We all knew that after 1979, 1985 would be International Youth Year. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the youth in the world (wherever possible) would join together with non-governmental organizations, youth groups and church and women's groups in a major campaign ... to fulfill a common dream: to green the planet? The youth throughout the world could be involved in planting and grow-

ing trees as a demonstration of their commitment to improve life on this planet; with a main thrust on reforestation and environmental education."

Our interview was interrupted with a phone call and I briefly scanned the material Mrs. Shelly had placed before me. In their latest project report it was written: "Due to a variety of reasons, including increased population, greater need for firewood for cooking and lack of priority for reforestation programs, the world is currently losing 152,000 square kilometers of forests a year. Denuding the land of trees is causing erosion and even in Europe and the United States, industrial pollution is threatening the existing forests. In some countries such as Mauritania, the Tree Project is 'a matter of life or death' as the United Nations Ambassador Mohammed Ould Hamody, said recently."

Mrs. Shelly continued immediately from where she had left off: "Yes, a far-reaching goal to some ... but one that we can start on right away—to regreen the planet, to return to a much more healthier balance between nature and people. This was an idea that I felt held deep symbolism. Young people (and I work with a great number of young people) are much more idealistic than we realize. They really *do* want to see a better world, but they are constantly faced with continued strife, war, nuclear arms, political

UN Photo

Mrs. Sally Swing Shelly, Chief of the Non-Governmental Section of the United Nations and one of the principle promoters of the Tree Project.

differences and conflicts at every level of society. Therefore, wouldn't it be nice, I thought, that if instead of an International Youth Year that would simply regurgitate the poor situation that the youth today are inheriting from us, we had one where they give their contribution toward changing the world. It seemed to fit right into the slogan for the year itself: 'Participation, Development and Peace' as an action which is positive and one that can also be done with other people. So I proposed this to the Non-Governmental Organizations Youth Committee in 1980 and it was very warmly received. The General Assembly later recommended that governments and citizens across the globe use the occasion of International Youth Year for increasing the awareness and the involvement of youth in activities for the protection and enhancement of the environment.' At its 37th session in 1982, the Assembly called for a feasibility study for a worldwide campaign of tree planting. Like most ideas in the United Nations, there has to be a long maturation period before the plan is formally adopted. Now, however, after NGO's acceptance of the program, reforestation has become a major part of the plans in four of the five regions of the world. Over sixteen different governments, mostly in the Third World countries of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, have endorsed the tree-planting campaign. Already 54,000 trees have been planted. The goal is one tree for every youth in the world: one billion trees by the end of 1985. Here in the United States a group of young people called 'The Tree People,' who will serve on the Tree Project's Advisory committee, plan to plant one million trees in Los Angeles in time for the Olympic Games."

"Reforestation?" I interrupted Mrs. Shelly to ask her to explain more this term that has been so frequently used in describing the Project.

"Reforestation is important because it doesn't imply going out in your back yard or schoolyard and planting one tree. One has to assure that the tree is protected, that it lives, and grows to flourish. Many trees must be planted and cared for so that they make a significant difference to the ecology. Actually the correct ecological term is 'social forestry'. The concept of this project has gone ►

UN Photo

around the globe; people are writing and talking about it. It's taking on life, form, and purpose. Groups of every kind are becoming involved (not only youth groups) and this is because they realize that through it they can make a significant contribution to our planet.

"I would like to share with you two examples of this that made a wonderful impression on me. During the Youth Conference that you attended in September, a young man from Bangladesh came up to speak to me. He told me that the Asian Youth Association was going around at a local level in his country selling seedlings of three types to the rural farmers: mahogany, jackfruit, and mangoes, for a very small sum of money. They told the people: 'you plant these trees, nurture them, see that the goats don't eat them, and at the end of five years you will have enough mangoes to feed your family rice all year.'

"You see?" Mrs. Shelly added enthusiastically. "Not only the ecology is changed but money and sustenance is shared with the very poorest!

"Another noteworthy contribution was made by one of our NGO's a number of years ago in southern Algeria. He planted a huge number of trees to create a buffer zone. Now, years later, this has literally changed the climate for these people, enabling them to plant fruit trees and other types of trees. There would be many more examples to explain why there has been such enthusiasm for this idea which involves many levels of human existence."

I asked Mrs. Shelly what were among the most positive goals achieved by the Tree Project.

Her answer was immediate: "Cooperation. I believe that it is an idea which can bring people together in a productive way. Three Regional meetings of the United Nations Member States in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific and the Arab countries have already come together to endorse the concept and together to designate a national week for specific projects around reforestation and tree planting operations. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Jaycees, the International Council of Women, the International Police Association, as well as the Movement for a Better World are working together to provide organizational help in many countries.

"In Barbados different religious groups met together to pool their talents and concerns. It was a mutual discovery of what each one could valuably lend to the project. Informing and involving the public in reforestation has become a concern of all. The Yale School of Forestry has shown in a recent study that by the year 2013 Senegal will not have one tree left for firewood if they don't start planting *now*. This is very serious. It is reaching the borderline of subsistence because these people survive mainly on millet and rice. You cannot eat raw millet or raw rice. They must have firewood to cook so they can eat.

"In such countries, all levels of society are working together to train other people—telling them that they must not cut new trees, that they must protect them ... this is their children's life.

"The young people of Los Angeles are planting one million trees to clear up the air before the beginning of the Olympic Games. A tree is a purifier of the air—it has a cleansing action. Furthermore it is worth nineteen air conditioners; it is *that* cooling in the summer time.

"You see"—Mrs. Shelly's pen seemed to underline in mid-air her point—"a Project which brings people together, creating a bond of positive interest that could have long-lasting effects on this home planet of ours!"

Mrs. Shelly was called to the door by her secretary. I was brought to reflect a moment on

Reforestation projects are currently taking place in many parts of the world. In the above photo we see work taking place in Kathmandu, Nepal, a country that suffers acutely from the imbalance of nature caused by a constant denuding of the land.

what she had shared. Somehow it recalled to mind a passage that I had once read from the Book of Leviticus: "I will give you rain in due season, so that the Land will bear its crops, and the trees their fruit; your threshing will last till vintage time, and your vintage till the time for sowing, and you will have food to eat in abundance, so that you may dwell securely in your land" (Lv. 26:4-6).

Such projects convey a sense of optimism: the harmony of nature disturbed by man's carelessness could be restored by his innovative concern. "All tithes of the land, whether in grain from the fields or in fruit from the trees belong to the Lord as sacred to Him" (Lv. 27:30).

As if intuiting my thoughts, Mrs. Shelly continued: "The tree is a symbol of life in almost all religions — life ... with its roots that require nurturing, its growth with flowering branches, its fruits. And as a symbol of life it is a symbol of continuity. We feel a commitment to educate people, particularly those in rural areas, to put back (into the soil) what they have taken out. The earth has been so good to us, we haven't bothered to replenish it. For every log we burn up in our fireplace up North, there should be a log put back into ecology. We want a sustained re-greening of the planet through environmental education, through planting trees on a yearly basis.

"I don't believe one is led to feel this way for merely ecological reasons. One actually feels something much more, that he or she is making a viable contribution towards preserving the living environment."

It had been an unusually long interview. I was grateful to Mrs. Shelly for her time. An anxious staff member returned for the second time to beg for just ten minutes of her time and I began to hastily gather my things and clear the spot. Mrs. Shelly stopped me as I reached over to disconnect my tape recorder: "I would like to say something ... or perhaps correct something we had said in the beginning ... I do not feel that I am the 'originator' of the Project ... that would be too self-centered. I would prefer to say that it was born in the minds of those people who really care about this earth."

I smiled and understood what she meant.

As I left the Secretariat Building of the United Nations I decided to take a brief detour from my walk home and pass the site of what had been the symbolic gesture launching the now worldwide Tree Project—the Rose Garden. Still there—bare and quite inconspicuous, in the midst of trees of fifteen to twenty-five years growth—was our little tree plant, a small but yet viable symbol of what Mrs. Shelly and all those who initiated the Project with her hoped for—a renewed, "re-greened" earth; another sign of the desire deeply rooted in our human heart to work together to improve the world we live in. □

HE CLOTHED WITH SHAPI

by ORESTE PALIOTTI

Brother Giovanni da Fiesole, known as "Beato Angelico" (Blessed Angelico) for the perfect integrity of his life and the almost divine beauty of his paintings, was held in high esteem by Pope Nicholas I, who occasionally went to watch him work on the frescoes in one of his chapels of his palace. One day the Pope told him, "Brother Giovanni, you have worked very hard. Today I want you to eat some meat." The monk, however, answered, "I don't have permission from my prior." "Well, I give you dispensation," said the Pope.

This anecdote, as told by Borselli, is one of the many brushstrokes depicting the spiritual stature of the Dominican monk, found in the rather scanty biography of Vasari. "He was never seen angry with any of his brother monks, which is truly remarkable and almost impossible to

IE INVISIBLE AND COLOR

believe. It was his custom never to retouch or correct his paintings, but to leave them always the way he had done them the first time because this was, he believed, the way the good Lord wanted it."

The title "Blessed" attached to his name by posterity in deference to his religious virtues and artistic merits, has now been officially sanctioned by Pope John Paul II and raised to liturgical level—an honor, so far unprecedented for a great artist. On February 18 of this year, more that 500 years after his death, the Pope himself celebrated a solemn mass in Rome's basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva where his body lies buried. The event was the highlight of a vast program of cultural conventions and

(Continued on page 13)

The Annunciation *by Fra Angelico (Convent of San Marco, Florence).*

Patron of Artists

During the solemn Holy Year celebration for artists on Saturday, February 18, in the Roman Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where the tomb of Blessed Angelico is located, the Pope proclaimed the outstanding Dominican painter "Patron before God of artists, especially of painters." The following are excerpts from the Pope's homily of that day.

During this liturgical meeting, we wish to honor a man who was given the name "Angelico." And his life—in deep harmony with the nickname given him — was one extraordinary "song" to God: "a song of praise in the presence of angels."

With his whole life he sang the glory of God, which he carried like a treasure in the depths of his heart and expressed *in his works of art. Fra Angelico* has remained in the memory of the Church and in the history of culture as an extraordinary religious and artist. A spiritual son of Saint Dominic, with his brush he expressed his "*summa*" of *divine mysteries*, as Thomas Aquinas enunciated them with theological language...

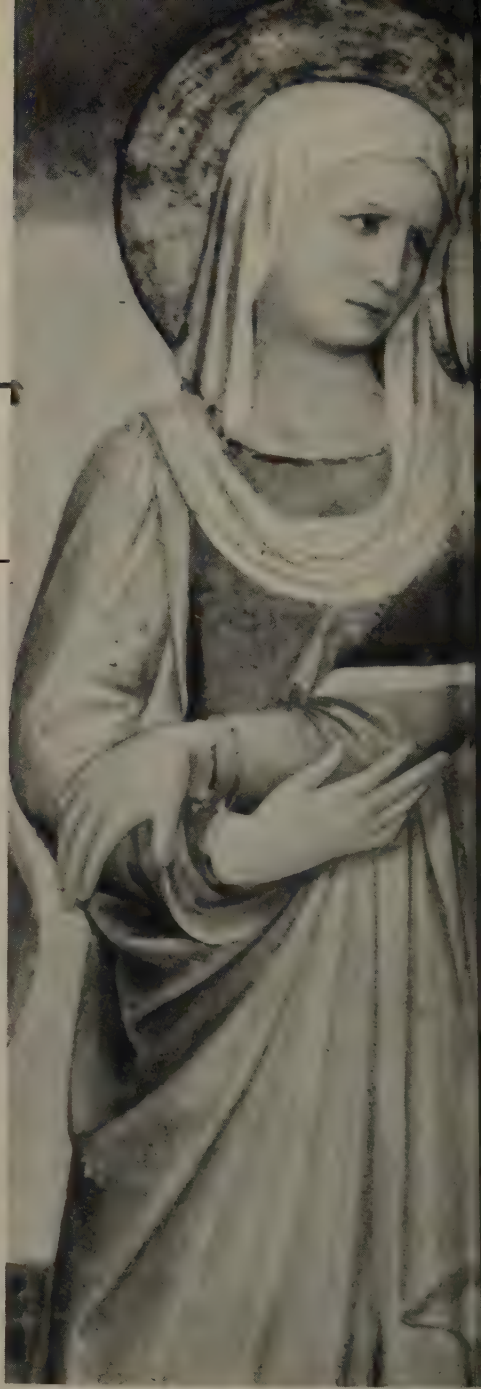
Portrait believed to be that of Fra Angelico from Raphael's The Dispute of the Sacrament *in the Vatican.*

To look at Blessed Angelico is to look at a model of life in which art is revealed as a path which can lead to Christian perfection: he was an exemplary religious and a great artist.

Called "Angelico" because of the goodness of his heart and the beauty of his paintings, Fra Giovanni of Fiesole was a priest-artist who was able to translate the eloquence of the Word of God into colors.

If he drew from his family hearth a clear and strong faith, he received from the Order of Dominicans, which he entered in 1420, a deepened knowledge of sacred doctrine and a stimulus to proclaim the mystery of salvation through the priestly ministry and through painting.

By consecrating himself to God, Blessed Angelico succeeded in becoming more a man, not only with others but for others; his works are a permanent message of living Christianity, and at the same time a deeply human message, founded on the superhuman power of religion, by virtue of which every man who lives in contact with God and his mysteries becomes like him in sanctity, in beauty, in blessedness; that is, a man according



Detail of the Crucifixion *in the Chapter House of the Convent of San Marco, Florence.*

to the original plans of his Creator (cf. Pius XII, AAS 1955, p.289).

In his own life he made true the organic and essential bond which exists between Christianity and culture, between man and the Gospel. In him, faith became culture, and culture became faith lived out. He was a religious who could communicate, through art, the values which are at the basis of the Christian way of life. He was a "prophet of sacred imagery: he could reach the summit of art by drawing inspiration from the mysteries of the faith" (cf. Pius XII, AAS 1955, p.285).

In him art becomes prayer.

By decreeing liturgical honors to Fra Giovanni of Fiesole, I intended to recognize the Christian perfection of the supreme painter, effective and sincere innovator of artistic spirituality, but I also wanted to attest to the Church's profound interest in the progress of culture and art, and to the fruitful dialogue with it.

Reprinted from L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, March 5, 1984.

(Continued from page 11)

celebrations honoring Beato Angelico and coincided with the Day of Jubilee for Artists.

It is said that there is a difference between religious art and sacred art. The former deals with a religious subject in any given way, while the latter aspires to making it known and venerated by those who see it. In religious art, the artist wants to be admired for himself; in sacred art he wants his subject to be loved. And this was the goal of Beato Angelico, or "Fra" Angelica as he is more commonly known.

Being the practical person he was (he was entrusted with tasks of great responsibility within his Order, and took care of the accounting and business affairs both in matters pertaining to his monastic life and his painters' workshop) he was extremely alert in keeping up to date with all the technical innovations in his field; but he was just as eager, if not more so, to make a masterpiece of his life as a man and as a Christian. "If we work at the things of Christ, we must remain in Christ always," was one of his favorite sayings.

Before being an artist, therefore, he was a man of God, working for him. This attitude defined his artistic personality and his sense of freedom in the ►

Angel greeting a Dominican monk (detail of The Last Judgment*) Museum of San Marco, Florence.*

role he chose to assume in Renaissance art. He instinctively adopted only those aspects of his period which, while modernizing the expressions of his own style, would not distort the character of his art. His art, in addition to its essentially religious purpose, reflects a point of doctrine: from creature to the Creator, from natural beauty to moral beauty. This explains his points of contact with the previous artistic and cultural tradition, which have come to him refreshed and re-elaborated by the Dominican reform of his time—a rediscovery of light as a means to reveal the divine presence in all things, a sacred conception of history where everything is pre-ordained toward a heavenly goal. It also explains his "lack of system" which, in the framework of his times, makes of him an original figure.

Much can be said about his naturalism, about his keen sense of reality as portrayed in all his works. The most fascinating characteristic of the art of Fra Angelico, however, is the sense of intense spirituality permeating his works. It coincides with a particularly happy moment in the history of the Church, thanks above all to great souls like Catherine of Siena and Blessed Raymond.

All the characters of his works are companions of his ascetic life. They have his same strength over human frailty, his eyes of the "pure of heart," his supernatural gentleness. They are people created to be free, fulfilled in their Christian destiny, each of them having accomplished the earthly pilgrimage of his soul, and reached sovereignty in the spirit. This is why his characters are never seen making a superfluous gesture but only in a pose of quiet composure reflecting their inner life.

According to Vasari, "He never neglected any of his religious duties for painting" and "those who wished to commission a painting from him would first send to the Prior to get permission, after that he gladly obliged." Thus, for Brother Giovanni, art is a talent to be used not for self-exhibitionism but for the service of others. Yet, together with the austerity of the contemplative, he possessed a warm outgoing personality as he shared the riches of his inner world. As time went by, he found expressions which could

reach the simple people in the street as well as intellectuals, his fellow monks in the Order, the princely court of the Medici and the humanist Pope — as though his painting had become his only means of preaching a sermon and of practicing the concern so characteristic of the Dominicans to share the fruits of his contemplation with the others.

His work also reveals signs of the kinship that linked him to Blessed Dominici and Saint Antonino, the great exponents of the Dominican reform. "Spiritual life is sincerely living the truth," wrote the former in his ardent and luminous prose. The clean air and the sincerity we find in Fra Angelico's paintings were first present in his life. His same sense of human nature brought back to the primitive innocence of paradise can be found in the Dominici.

The other, Saint Antonino, future Archbishop of Florence and also a saint enamored of beauty, states that "the body of Christ in the most beautiful human body that ever existed or will exist." And Fra Angelico couldn't help remembering this in his crucifixions and depositions.

Those Dominican saints rejected neither life, nor art, nor culture, and it was in fact Saint Mark's convent in Florence that had the first collection and the most beautiful library of the time. They cultivated art and culture and helped others to do so in order to receive and communicate that spark of the divine that gives greatness to human destiny.

One of the angel musicians from the Tabernacle. (Museum of San Marco, Florence).

Toward the end of 1458, Fra Angelico was commissioned to paint the frescoes of Saint Mark's. He was free to work, without having to conform his style to the taste of patrons or of current fashion, free to work for his Order and for his fellow monks exclusively. In relinquishing the apparent splendor of the Renaissance style in favor of a more simple manner of expression marked by a spirit of renunciation and humility, Fra Angelico revealed his true self.

Looking at these frescoes today we still experience the emotion which the artist expressed in these images and colors; as in the *Annunciation*, in the *Passion and Death of Christ*, in *Mary Magdalen's Encounter with the Risen Lord*, and in his depiction of the joy of Paradise.

There is no need here to add landscape or background details. What was necessary to have people understand the scenes and events of scripture ceased to have any relevance for ascetic monks who were so familiar with them. The scenes were thus reduced to the essential and what was most effective. Nothing but the absolutely necessary is found, therefore, and what is needed to recall an episode, to convey a truth, helping others to begin a dialogue with the eternal, to maintain it.

The art of Fra Angelico is the reflection of spiritual freedom, the very atmosphere conveyed through his paintings seems to come from a region where the limits of time and space no longer exist. □

WORD OF LIFE

"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."

(Jn. 14:12)

This is one of the more surprising statements made by Jesus. How could it be that his disciples would perform works such as his and even greater? Don't we read in the Gospel that he performed miracle after miracle during his life? Didn't he even raise people from the dead?

Perhaps we can better understand what he meant if we look more closely at what was intended by "even greater" works.

But let's take things in order.

It was the evening before his passion. During the last supper, among the many sublime things which he said and did as he continued to prepare his disciples right up until the last moment, he spoke about his unity with the Father, something which was so evident in his works. At this point he declared:

"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."

Jesus begins with "I tell you most solemnly." With these words he is indicating the importance and depth of what he is about to say.

Then immediately afterwards he refers to "whoever believes in me": not only to those disciples there present or to certain privileged people, but to each and every Christian. Whoever believes in Christ, whoever is united to him and receives life from him, is capable of performing works such as he performed and even greater ones.

We understand of course that Jesus is not referring to just any sort of works, but to those which he performs, that is, works that will continue everything that he has done to bring all people back into communion with the Father and to proclaim salvation to them.

Nor does this mean that the disciples will be superior to their Master, because through their works it is Jesus himself, even after his return to the Father, who will continue to act in the world.

"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."

Regarding the "even greater works" which Jesus will perform through those who believe in him, we can think of the miracles performed by the disciples, of the greater number of conversions which came about after their preaching; or of the proclamation of the Gospel by Christians all over the world, whereas Jesus remained within the limits of Palestine. But certainly the greatness of these works does not lie primarily in their external characteristics, such as number or geographic extension.

The essence of these "greater works" consists in giving others the divine life, the strength of the Spirit and, with these, the possibility of becoming adopted children of God. This Jesus fully obtained for us by his death and resurrection. He communicated this Life to us after he had been glorified through the works of his disciples.

In fact Jesus said, "Because I am going to the Father." His departure would not interrupt his work for the salvation of the world. Rather it would assure its growth and expansion. It would not mean separation from his disciples, but rather the assurance of his real, though invisible, presence within them. It is through their unity with the Risen Lord that they will be able to perform the "even greater works" of uniting all with the Father and with one another.

"I tell you most solemnly, whoever believes in me will perform the same works as I do myself, he will perform even greater works, because I am going to the Father."

How can we live this word of life?

It is up to us to allow Jesus to dwell here on earth today and complete his work; he works through us if we let him.

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

Even for his first coming on earth, God asked one of us, Mary, for her consent. Mary believed, adhering totally to the Father's plan. And what "work" did her faith produce? Because of her "yes," the Word became flesh (Jn. 1:14) in her, and the salvation of humanity was made possible.

We, too, have a tremendous responsibility. We must believe in Jesus for him to live in us and work through us. We must welcome and put into practice his words, which are all summarized in the commandment of love. Let's forget about ourselves and start loving as he loved, with a boundless love.

Then, over the grave of our own ego, the Risen Lord with his power, his light and his joy will live more fully each day in each one of us and in our midst.

The world has great need of his presence. Let this be our "work," our "even greater work": to live in such a way that we can offer the Risen Lord, living in us and in our midst, to everyone we meet. Countless people will find in him that which cannot be found anywhere else—hope, goodness, truth, unity, peace. And together with him we will work for the true transformation of the world.

Chiara Lubich

THE ESSENTIAL IN LIFE

Recently my husband was on an out of town trip, and for his return the children and I had planned a welcome home dinner for him. On the day of his arrival, with the children's help, we made a master plan for the day, so that we would be sure to remember all the details.

Just as I was settling in to begin the preparations, our very active two year old found his way to the fridge, and dropped a box of a dozen eggs on the freshly washed kitchen floor. Our master plan vanished before my eyes, and my irritation was so great that I dared not say anything as I was cleaning up the mess for fear of exploding.

No sooner had I finished the job when Paul struck again—this time spilling, an entire carton of milk on the counter and floor. Faced with the mess and also realizing how much more time cleaning up would take from my master plan, I felt like turning around and leaving the room. It was then that the word of life came to my mind: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself" (Jn. 12:32). In this cross—a little one after all— that was in front of me I could love, ready to give up even the plans for that evening. I began cleaning the floor, but this time I felt happy—remembering to do the work for Jesus. When the older children came in from school that afternoon and realized how much there was still to do they were disappointed and ready to give up. When, however, I explained my experience of that day, they began to help me make alternate preparations. When my husband returned, we were all happy. The joy and the peace among us was what made our evening party a success. The experiences of the morning had helped me remember what is essential in life.

N. F.

EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED

My husband asked me if I'd like to go out for a quiet evening, just the two of us. All week I had been driving our youngsters to their various activities, listening to them and sometimes being drawn into the high emotional pitch that is part of the high school years. I was looking forward to some calm relaxation.

Two friends we've known since college days called and asked if we were free. Their busy schedules and ours left only that evening free so my husband and I talked it over and decided to postpone our evening out in order to see these friends.

As I started to straighten up the house in preparation for our guests I realized how

disappointed I felt at not being able to go out. The prospect of a movie or dinner alone with my husband was hard to give up and I knew it would be almost impossible to find another time when we would both be free.

I was working in the bedroom when my eyes fell across a copy of the word of life: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provisions for the desires of the flesh" (Rm. 13:14). I paused to let the words sink in and I was struck by the contrast between my little disappointment that was consuming my thoughts and the greatness of the gift of love that comes from Jesus. I could nurture my feelings of disappointment, or I could try to fill myself with as much of his love as I could. I decided to love.

A little later our oldest child, a senior in high school, answered the door as our guests arrived. I was so surprised when he didn't excuse himself after a few minutes to go on with what he was doing. He had been telling us how many hours of work he had to make up during the weekend. It occurred to me that he, too, was trying to love by staying to visit with these friends who were also very fond of him.

We were all laughing, having a great time telling the most entertaining tales from our college days to prepare our son for his experience next year. There was something very beautiful about that evening—as if that desire to love had created a special atmosphere. It was the calm and relaxed evening I had originally wanted.

M.B.

From the teacher's desk: "Here I am!"

I do not pretend to be a psychologist. I am not one. I am an American educator in a high school. My students are a true cross section of the American public. Among them we have, on occasion, students with extremely deep problems. Because I teach a foreign language, I hardly ever run into serious situations. We language teachers get "the cream of the crop" so to say.

This year, however, had been different for me. In one class I had two very emotionally disturbed students present: a boy and a girl. From the first day of school I could tell it was going to be rough. And it was.

Each day that I tried to teach, these two people would constantly laugh and make comments. It was difficult for me to correct them, the boy in particular. He was sixteen years of age but looked every bit of twenty. He was tall and of very large stature. I was fearful each day to face him in class. I knew I had to correct him each time that he would disrupt the lesson and yet I feared that perhaps he was going to retaliate. He would always stare at me for quite a long time afterwards as if he were planning something in his mind. Or at least that is what I thought.

This occurrence of stopping class and reprimanding him would go on day after day. I screamed at him and didn't care what he would do afterwards. Then I made the decision to get rid of him—kick him out of the class permanently, but by the end of the class I was remorseful inside of myself. I knew he was a person who needed to be loved. He was asking for attention and was "shouting out for help." I knew I couldn't reject him. So at the end of class I called him up to my desk and said to him that I was really sorry I had yelled at him but he had to try and put himself in my place. I was very open with him and suddenly he looked at me and apologized, too, saying he had very deep home problems. It was really special how he opened up to me. I then thought from that day on all would be fine.

Not so. The next day rolled around and there we were, he and I, back in the boxing ring with our gloves on. He started to act up and and so did I.

By this time I was enraged. I stormed into his guidance counselor's office and demanded that we *three* have a conference. We met the next day all together, but before I went into the office I tried to make a pact with God to love this kid and meet with him, putting all my anger aside. That's exactly what I did, and it worked. The boy began to speak very openly about himself being a failure and worth nothing. He seemed so lost and completely desperate. It was very difficult for me to see a youngster such as himself so very despondent. So I spoke a little bit to him saying that I, too, in my life had failed in many ways.

He looked at me very surprised and said, "Really?" Then the counselor also said the same. We both assured the boy that all people were going through more or less what he was and that he really was not so different. Then I told him what I try to do, to take each moment at a time, and if I fail in one moment, to jump into the next one and start all over

again. He liked that idea very much. He seemed to want to try it. And you know what? He did!

There was such a change in him that I could not believe it. One day he went even so far as to ask me to change his seat because he was being 'distracted' by the girl sitting next to him. So I did. He began to pay attention and even raise his hand all the time. It was really a miracle. Still he was having some difficulty with the course since it was quite demanding.

One afternoon he came to me very upset. He said he just *had* to talk to me. I couldn't imagine what it was about. So I waited for him after school and when he came in there were also other students present. He looked at them then said to me, "No, I must speak to you alone, privately." So we went out into the corridor. He looked at me and said, "I'm leaving your class. My counselor thinks it's best because I'm having such difficulty with it, but I want you to know that you are not the reason. In fact I really don't want to leave." I smiled and assured him I understood. I then wished him the best of luck. As I went back into the room I thought to myself, "Love surely wins out in the end."

From that day on things went about normally even though this student was no longer in my class, or was he? A few days later, there he was again, smiling at me from his desk. With great astonishment I asked him what he was doing there. While laughing he replied, "I asked my counselor and he said it's alright for me to stay in your class if I really wanted to, so here I am."

G.G.

Against the current

I am a teacher of children with emotional, behavioral and learning disorders. Along with my regular teaching duties, I am also a member of a team that refers these children for special services such as guidance counseling, speech therapy or psychological testing. At times it is decided that a child could receive more appropriate attention in a different setting, and it is up to us to see that the child be properly placed.

Just recently I was given the results of testing, interviews and case histories on four children with whom I had been working individually since the beginning of the school year. I was the last member of the team to receive these results and it was up to me to either agree or disagree with the recommendations made by the other members. As I read the reports I agreed with the recommendation that two of the children be sent to a program that specialized in the types of problems these children seemed to be having.

When I read the other two reports, however, I began to have doubts about the decisions my team members had made. They had recommended that these two children be placed in a regular classroom based on the fact that their intelligence testing showed them to be capable of handling the schoolwork required on their grade level. I had worked with these children; I felt that moving them into a classroom of thirty children would be traumatic for them emotionally and academically, but I had some real reservations about voicing my opinion since I was the youngest and least-experienced member of the team.

At a certain point, while shuffling and reshuffling the papers in my indecisiveness, I remembered something: "In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40). I knew what I had to do then; I had to speak up in order to love Him in the children.

As I was heading for the office where the meeting would take place I met one of my fellow team members. I asked her, "Do you really feel that John and Michael would be better off in a regular classroom?" She paused for a moment and then said, "I'm glad you asked that. I had my doubts but I saw that everyone else had signed their names to the recommendations and I didn't want to disagree." I told her that I had also had doubts too and had disagreed. I suggested that the two of us could approach the others with the reasons for our recommendations.

When we walked into the office another team member was waiting and asked me for the reports. When she saw that I had disagreed with the decision of the others she said, "You know, I'm relieved that you did this. I also felt John and Michael weren't ready for a regular classroom but I was swayed by seeing the other signatures on the recommendation form." I was shocked at first that it would have been so easy to uproot these children and place them in an inappropriate setting simply because we didn't have the courage to disagree with the majority. Then I remembered that I, too, had been about to sign my name so as not to 'rock the boat.' Only the words of Jesus had given me the courage to act.

D.C.

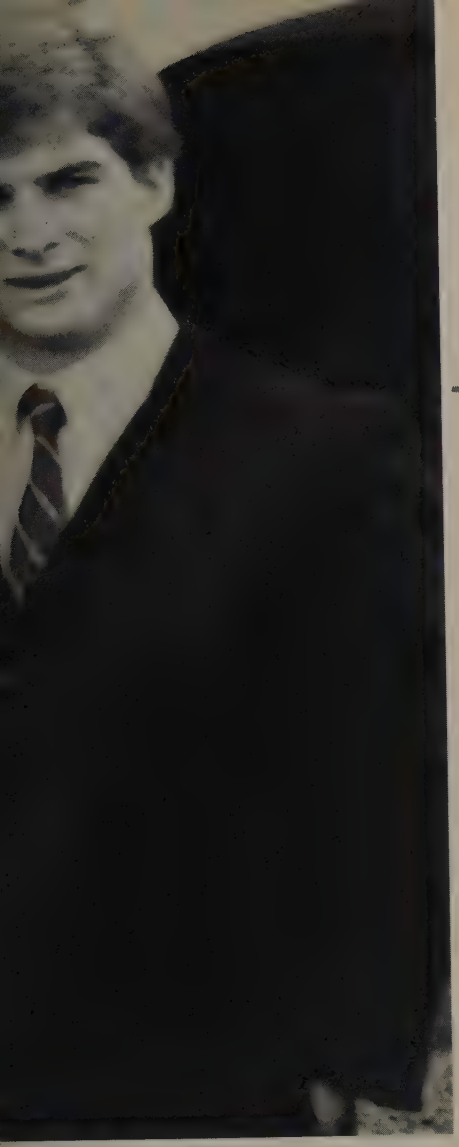
A family in California

prepared by PHYLLIS SCARINGE

Tom: I'm from the Philadelphia area, a small coal mining town called Lansford. My parents moved to Wilmington, Delaware because the mines closed down and a lot of people were out of work. My Dad got a job there. So I grew up in a medium-sized city—250,000 people, very ethnic. The Jews all lived in one area, the Poles in another area, the Italians in "Little Italy."

In high school I got chosen "Most Likely to Fail" by all my teachers because I wouldn't pay attention in school. I hated it; I was a member of a fraternity and all I ever cared about was cars and clothes.

I spent one year in the work force. We didn't have enough money to put me through college nor did I have the grades; but California, where my sister lived, had Junior Colleges which I could qualify for, so I



decided to come to California. And as it turned out, my mother came with me. So we came out here and I went to college for two years and really had to buckle down to get a good education. I had to work twice as hard as everyone else because I had goofed off in high school so much, but they salvaged some transferrable units. After college I went into the service for six months. When I got out, I met Jean.

Jean: My story is different. I was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, in the plains area, and my father worked for the railroad there for many years. My mother was from Wyoming and California because her Dad worked on the railroad and would move the family back and forth. My father's parents came from Sweden.

When I was fourteen, we sold our house and moved to California, I continued school, went to high school, started Junior College and met Tom.

Jean: My hopes and dreams for the future were simple. I think I just wanted to get married and have a family. I wanted a good marriage.

Tom: That reminds me of an interesting thing that happened while I was still in high school. One day I was at Mass with my friend Ray and they announced that on Monday evenings they would be having a special Novena. I thought we should go but it took me quite a while to convince Ray. He thought Mass was already too much.

After going about four times it dawned on me that you were supposed to ask for something. I was hoping Mary would help me with my life. After a while, I began to listen to the voice inside asking, "What is it you really want, why are you here?' So I had to think, but I can almost visualize it although it's been many, many years. I thought, "Mary, I came from a broken home and if you could make my marriage in heaven that would be very, very beautiful. I won't be divorced if my marriage is made by you. So I pray that you find me the right woman." So that's how we met, I guess.

Jean: We were happy from the beginning. Spiritually, however, we were like butterflies. We would jump from one movement to another, or one service group to another about every six months. I think, however, that that was the beginning of our journey. Why we were attracted to the Focolare, we ourselves did not know at first. Its spirituality seemed to grow on us.

Tom: The light, to Jean and me, became very evident at the Mariapolis.[1]

Jean: I remember the first Mariapolis, the first few days, there was really no talk about suffering, and I wondered if it was a part of the Movement. Tom and I would say to ourselves, "They act like suffering doesn't exist. How do they handle it?" Then it came along. On the fourth day we heard about it, and it was called Jesus Forsaken. Someone was sharing how at the beginning of the Movement, believing that Jesus suffered the most when on the cross he cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Chiara[2] and her companions had decided to choose him as their Ideal. They said how, from that moment, in all the manifestations of suffering, especially spiritual suffering, they recognized his countenance; viewing their suffering as a participation in his, they would embrace him forsaken in that suffering. Very often, they said, by loving in this way, joy and peace would be experienced again, and unity restored.

That really struck me because if there was a suffering for me as I was growing up, I would just push it down, and I'd smile and act as though everything was fine. I wanted peace in the family. I wanted peace no matter what. I just tried to ►

carry it all myself. But you know when you do that, it builds up resentment and eventually it's going to come out in some other way. So it was really a new thought to me, a new approach, to hear about loving Jesus Forsaken—loving him in the suffering. I thought that was really beautiful.

There were a lot of new ideas from that first Mariapolis—to live in the present moment, and how to make myself one with every person I meet. When we went home I was conscious of living in a new way. I was the kind of mother who has a job, children and a husband, and who works around the house trying to do two or three things at one time: talk on the phone, make dinner, scrub the floor, wash the kitchen—a mother who just has to have her hands in every pot. But after the Mariapolis, if somebody called or came to the door or if I ran into someone unexpectedly, I would drop what I was doing, or let go of what I wanted to do, and just try to be at least concerned and really "one" with them.

Tom: I had always heard that God is love. I felt that if you wanted to know God then you didn't have to know how to read or write in order to do this. The more, then, that I tried to love my neighbor, the more I realized that you could be illiterate or a genius and still do it. This is it. I recognized it in my head. I realized that everyone, no matter what station in life, could love God and their neighbor.

Jean: We love one another more in the family and life has

acquired a new dimension, with joy and pain. Like last year I had a miscarriage. At the time I didn't even know for sure if I was pregnant. After fifteen years of not having any babies, I had to first accept the pregnancy and then accept the miscarriage. It was Holy Week and the miscarriage happened on Holy Thursday night. There's a special Mass at the seminary and I had been looking forward to it all week. That day I hadn't felt well but the pregnancy hadn't been confirmed. Just as I started to go up to Communion I felt sick. It was really hard for me not to be able to receive the Eucharist, but I had to go.

I recognized in my suffering an aspect of His right away and said yes to it. It was more of a suffering for me not to receive the Eucharist than the pain I had, but it was quite clear that it was the will of God at that time. The next day I went to the doctor. It was very painful but I thought of the sufferings of Christ on that day, Good Friday, and thought I could endure this little pain as a small token in thanks for his sufferings for us. I really felt his love at that moment.

When I got home, the realization set in that I had lost the baby, but I never did experience any depression from it. I became pregnant six weeks later. I looked at it as a way to do God's will in raising this child, and raising it for God.

Tom: Now the baby is born, a beautiful baby girl. We have to live each moment at a time just as we've tried to do throughout the pregnancy.

I can't think that when this child's ready to start college I'll be sixty-two and not able to support a child in college; I just live each moment as it comes. But I think that this baby will help me to do that. To have another child at forty-four is a very fearful thing in our society and it can be so traumatic that it can't help but push you into living in the present moment.

Jean: I guess the fact of having been unemployed for quite a while helped us to trust more than ever in God. I was reflecting at Thanksgiving that despite our struggles I'm still grateful for the growth that we both experienced through it.

Tom: A friend of mine said that once you make a decision, once you say "yes" to God, he takes you up on it, he takes you seriously. Every time then that I lost a job I would call my friend and tell him and he would say, "Well, Tom, God is taking you seriously."

Jean: It began at the Mariapolis of 1982 when the talk on Jesus Forsaken really struck us both. The speaker said the key to unity is to love Jesus Forsaken. I know it went straight to my heart and I'm sure Tom's too. But it was "yes" immediately. We had really been learning and growing and reaching forth since we met the Movement and its spirituality and that seemed to be the whole answer for us. And He did take us seriously. As soon as we got back from the Mariapolis that year, Tom lost his job. And that's when all this started with his jobs. But we never felt abandoned at all.

Tom: The fruit of the unity that we had experienced during our unemployment which was off and on for about two years... We kept going backwards in every sense, our savings, our equity in our home, the fact that we had to go to Jean's Mom and Dad for money... In the Our Father it says "Give us this day our daily bread," and we also pray to "give us the means to do it." It's probably one of the most stressful things for a person to go through, unemployment and lack of enough money to get by on. But Jean and I realized that we could love Jesus Crucified and Forsaken, and that if we were to go through this, we had to have unity. We had to make decisions in unity and at the same time stay open to the will of God. We never closed the door on anything. There were times when I'd wake up in the morning and the money was running out. There had not been any response to my resumes for a few days, nothing in sight; but we'd pray together and ask specifically for a job that day. If the day passed, and by 6:00 p.m. there was no job, then we'd know that it was not God's will for us that day because we had prayed and asked. So not a day went by that we didn't pray and ask. We had nothing to be unhappy about. We had made decisions in unity as to the direction I should take in looking for employment, what companies should get a resume, and how we should spend our money, since we were so limited. But these decisions were made in unity. We really felt the love of God. Not only that, but our children would pray with us, too.

Jean: Like Tom said, if a job hadn't come by 6:00 that evening, then it was time to live the present moment and not worry. It was time for the family, and to enjoy each other. God was working on getting Tom a job and we had done our part that day, too. We had a great deal of peace.

Tom: When the money would run out at least we felt we had spent it the way God had wanted us to. Before I was unemployed I really never did any housework because I used to get up at 4:30 and get home at 7:00 in the evening. Jean was working long hours by then, and I was home, so I assumed some chores around the house. Those hours of cleaning became very beautiful for me because I felt I had done something to contribute to the running of the house. Jean would appreciate it when she got home from work and saw how nice the house looked. But it was for God, I'd say as I was vacuuming—'this is for you, Jesus'.

Jean has probably changed more than I have since we met the Movement. She always says that I was the person who changed first, and then she came along, but she has become the pillar of strength so to speak. I would often say that I wanted her to feel she could share everything with me. Something has happened to her because now she can, and she does. In fact, when we get into a discussion, all of a sudden she sees this obstacle in herself and she dissolves it. She embraces Jesus Forsaken right in front of me. It seems like she has recognized something within herself, something that for years had really stopped us from becoming one.

Jean: I don't know if I can explain it any more than that. But we have received many graces. I did have a lot of walls up for a long time. I felt that he was the talker and I never really got a chance to express how I felt. Now it doesn't matter whether I do or not.

Tom: Jean talks now. There is something very beautiful that happened. I see that look on her face, and maybe even a little smile and this calm, this peace, and then this unity between us. It is very beautiful. □

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1) The summer gathering of the Focolare Movement. 2) Founder of the Focolare Movement.

MARIAPOLIS 1984

The 1984 Mariapolis will be an extraordinary opportunity to learn, to grow, to share and above all to experience unity which is the basis and goal of the Christian community. You, your family and friends and all those interested in knowing more about the Focolare spirituality are cordially invited to attend.

The Mariapolis are the summer meetings of the Focolare, held every year, for those who wish to come into contact with it.

For one week the Mariapolis offers to hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life a very full program that includes general sessions with talks on the spirituality of unity, sharing of experiences in living this spirituality, documentaries, meetings in small sharing groups and recreational programs. The Mariapolis is a time for prayer and recollection. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of each day and all participants gather together at the conclusion of the activities for evening prayer.

Children have separate activities which involve them in the life of the Mariapolis through various spiritual and recreational programs. Special programs are available for teenagers as well.

The week, however, is more than the sum of its parts. It is an experience of how life, also every day life, can be transformed if love and unity are at its foundation. When the Mariapolis ends, people find that it was not only a tremendously enjoyable week, but they have experienced a way of living that they will be able to bring back home.

SOUTHWEST:

New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico
July 1, after supper - July 7, after breakfast

Home of the main campus of New Mexico State University, Las Cruces is a pleasant blend of indian-spanish-anglo heritage and modern technology. A city of 60,000, Las Cruces is the second largest city in New Mexico. Its most distinguishing geographical features are the Organ Mountains to the east and the Rio Grande to the West. The university is located on the south edge of Las Cruces and is 40 miles from El Paso, Texas.

NORTHWEST:

Western Washington University
Bellingham Washington
July 22, after supper - July 28, after breakfast

Western Washington University is situated in the hills overlooking the city of Bellingham, the bay and many of the San Juan Islands. Its architectural blend of the traditional and the modern reflects the majestic beauty of the Pacific Northwest. Modern freeways bring Seattle within easy driving distance. Bellingham is situated 22 miles south of the Canadian border and 90 miles north of Seattle. The nearest large airports are in Vancouver, B.C., Canada and Seattle-Tacoma, Washington. Don't forget, you'll have to cross the border if you land in Vancouver. Bellingham is readily accessible by Greyhound bus and Amtrak train.

MIDWEST/EAST COAST:

Mansfield University
Mansfield, Pennsylvania
July 29, after lunch - August 4, after breakfast
(Box lunch provided at no additional cost.)

Located on a hill overlooking the borough of Mansfield the University boasts of magnificent views, woodlands and farms. Soaring hills and fertile valleys enfold the college in the grandeur of Pennsylvania's northern tier. Situated near the intersection of U.S. Routes 6 and 15, the college is 14 miles from Wellsboro, PA; 28 miles from Elmira, NY; 31 miles from Corning, NY and 48 miles from Williamsport, PA.

QUEBEC: **(in French only)**

Universite de Sherbrooke
Sherbrooke, Quebec
August 5,after supper - August 11, after breakfast

CARIBBEAN: **(in Spanish only)**

The Mariapolis for the Caribbean will be held in Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic. Space is limited. Invitations are being sent only to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE MARIAPOLIS CONTACT THE FOCOLARE CENTER NEAREST YOU (See inside back cover)

A passion for martyrdom

This is the fifth in our series of imagined "reports" from the first century A.D. on the way the truths of the Christian faith were transmitted. In this account we travel the streets of the Egyptian city of Alexandria, one of the most important of the Mediterranean ports—a renowned cultural center, and the seat of schools of both philosophy and theology.
The school of theology, founded by Pantaenus, was made famous by Clement of Alexandria; and its most celebrated representative was a young Egyptian of exceptional talent—Origen.

by SILVANO COLA

To live in Alexandria, that famous Egyptian metropolis, is almost as much an honor as to live in Rome. Throughout the world people speak with pride of its library and its museum. At one time the library housed the most impressive collection of books in the world. It is said that there were over 700,000 volumes there 49 years before Christ was born, when Julius Caesar entered the city and made a huge bonfire of them.

Later the library was rebuilt; however it is unlikely that it will ever again achieve its former magnificence.

The museum houses a prestigious assembly of the most highly skilled scholars and scientists—as rightly befits any "Temple of the Muses"—and all at the expense of the state.

Alongside this extremely cultured life, however, there exist the peasants. Along the banks of the Nile they continue mutely to sow their grain, to harrow it each spring, and harvest it under a sun that splits the very rocks beneath their feet.

In the meantime, the merchant princes continue to wheel and deal around the wharfs of what has become the most important grain market of the Mediterranean.

Tradition says that Mark, the Evangelist, was the first to bring the Gospel to Egypt; and that he founded several churches in Alexandria.

Questioning four Christians, whom I had met, on this subject, they took me to Bucolia, a district in the east of the city, and I was shown a church below which, they assured me, in a crypt, lay the apostle's body, together with those of his successors.

There were the tombs of some ten bishops who had made the Church flourish in Alexandria; who had had the joy of seeing the faith among the people; and who had had to put up with so much when the teaching about God went astray due to the Gnostics—(Basilides and Valentinus—and that teacher of immorality called Carpocrates)—who had written strange "Revelations," which were claimed to have been received through an inspired virgin named Philomena!

A school for the catechumens

There exists in Alexandria, of course, a "School" of vast culture, with very deep roots in Greek scholarship. The majority of people distrust these intellectuals, and the Christians have set up a modest school of their own, paid for out of their own pockets, in which they can instruct their catechumens. The first catechist of the school, so I am told, was a Sicilian named Pantaenus. His successor was the famous Clement, known as Clement of Alexandria, though it would seem he did not originally come from Egypt, but had met Pantaenus by chance when they were both undertaking a lengthy crossing of the Mediterranean. Clement had been a pagan philosopher, and had only recently been converted to Christianity. He had embarked on the journey in order to discover the most reliable teachers of the Gospel. Having ►

found Pantaenus he never left him, and when he died Clement took over the school.

The school of Clement of Alexandria has made quite an impression: primarily because he does not inflate his students with theories, but strives to encourage them to attain perfection in a living relationship with the three divine Persons of the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—explaining to them, and showing them how to experience the action of the Trinity in the soul. As that great teacher said, "Do you desire to be one within yourself and one with God? Then always live with that love which both comes from God and also carries you to God. In this way, then, your soul with be filled with light."

In recent years an extraordinary young man joined the school, and caused everyone to take notice. He is an Egyptian, born in the city of Alexandria, of Christian parents. From very early in his life there have been stories told of his spirituality. His name is Origen. As a child his father Leonidas, taught him to read the Gospels, and the child is said to have had so much love for them that even at the age of six he was asking his father questions that even that scholar found difficult to answer.

Two hundred and two years after the birth of Christ, the Emperor Septimus Severus of Rome unleased a violent persecution against the Christians of Africa. In that carnage, besides Perpetua and Felicity, Leonidas was condemned to death. Origen was seventeen years old.

Egyptian Tourist Authority

Origen felt forsaken. If his father, then why not him also? He is said to have run up and down the streets crying out that he too was a Christian; while his mother ran behind him, begging him to have pity on her.

On the day of execution, while Leonidas was being put to death, the only way that the boy's mother could restrain him was by locking him up in the house.

And what did he do? He took pen and paper and wrote to his father, encouraging him... "Resist the temptation to use mother, me, and the rest of the

"To live in Alexandria, that famous Egyptian metropolis, is almost as much an honor as to live in Rome."

family, as an excuse for avoiding martyrdom."

What a passion for martyrdom burned in Origen! A passion to put his life continually at stake for Christ!

The year following the mass martyrdoms (203 A.D.), all the catechists having fled the city on account of the imperial edict forbidding proselytism, Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria put Origen in charge of the school for catechumens. Origen accepted enthusiastically. His love for martyrdom has never abated ... the very essence of his teaching is that to die for Christ is to be perfect in love, because love is stronger than death. For us, then, to live in this way means to experience a foretaste of the resurrection already in this present life.

Seeing the numbers of Christians increasing but at the same time being troubled by the fact of their loose living, Origen expressed all the pain he felt within his own soul in these memorable words:

"Can we possibly be still believing in God? Certainly not! In the moment when martyrdom was knocking at our door, when we followed the bodies of the martyrs to their graves and then gathered again right away in church—then we believed! Then the whole community stood erect, unshakable. The catechumens were instructed in the midst of martyrs, between the death of one Christian and the next! Christians confessed their faith without hesitation! And the catechumens were instructed with the realization that martyrdom very likely awaited them, and they were encouraged to proclaim their faith until death ... and their faith in the living God was not troubled by fear!

The faithful were fewer then, it is true: but they were true followers of Christ, following the narrow way; the way of suffering that leads to life!"

But, after all, one might argue, the ideal of the poets and philosophers is wisdom, and what better pursuit could they look for?

For such comments Origen has a forceful reply. "There is no wisdom," he affirms, "that can dispense us from following Jesus, or from loving the cross." So far as Origen is concerned all worldly concepts of wisdom fade into insignificance in the presence of the wisdom of the cross. The mind is darkened by the twisted fantasies of the philosophers; and only love for the cross can enlighten it!

Greek philosophy examines the Christian gospel.

Alexandria is a cultural center: and that means Greek philosophical ideas of God which stealthily insinuate themselves into the soul, abound. Some forty years ago a philosopher in Rome, named Celsus, wrote a slanderous book against Christianity entitled "A Truthful Commentary." It circulated in all the intellectual circles causing considerable comment. It described the Christians as "barbarians; poverty stricken simpletons ensnared by magic."

Origen read the book and publically designated it "A Lying Commentary"; and has written a clear-cut refutation, quoting—for example—that Celsus misstates St. Paul as having said "In this world wicked things come from a quest for wisdom; while the good things from stupidity." Origen, knowing that Paul wrote, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God," was understandably incensed. Asked for his opinion he said, "Something must be done here. Obviously many souls are thirsting for a doctrine which also satisfies the intellect. If we Christians do not satisfy them with that truth which is Jesus, these people will accept any food they can find.

"Basically, can any Christian be content with a faith that is not reasonable? If one really loves Jesus, can anyone risk allowing himself not to know him?

"We must acquire an almost "maternal attitude of love towards all men. We must aim at having such love for everyone that we can come down to their level, just as the Word himself came down to our level, to bring us to eternal life.

"Instead of looking down on those who have not received the grace that we have received we should set out—with the love of a mother—to instruct them, to bring the light to them as Mary brought the light and grace that she had received to Elizabeth.

"To let others die in ignorance is like stripping the flesh of Christ! Did not Jesus die for all mankind?"

The surprising response

Origen's book opened floodgates! No one ever expected the deluge that ensued. Saint Epiphanius counted 600 so-called "volumes." ("A larger quantity than any normal person would be capable of reading," commented St. Jerome). It must be admitted that these volumes were little more than scrolls of papyrus.

To understand these words of Origen one must have seen him at work. On one occasion I saw that almost unbelievable sight. As if it were nothing he dictated to seven scribes, one after another, who stood behind him. When they were unable to keep up any longer he retired to his cell to pray. It was only then that I appreciated those astonishing words.

He had a relationship with Jesus that was so personal that he spoke to Him as if he were physically present, as one friend speaks to another. He spoke with simplicity; and he discovered everything that it is good for any man to hope for, or that the Father could give to any man.

It is understandable therefore that, in the introduction to his commentary on the Gospel of John, his first words were: "No one can hope to captivate the soul of this Gospel unless he has rested on the breast of Jesus and unless he has received, from Jesus, Mary as his mother."

For Origen, the way of contemplating God is that of John, for whom—the Father being invisible—Jesus is the revelation of the Father, he knew the Father as he knew himself, and consequently he is the only one who can make the Father known to man. But Jesus also is no longer visible? True, but was it not he who left us his Spirit?... and so Origen has advice for each of us... When anyone has any doubts about the faith, go to Jesus, because 'where two or three are gathered together' in unity in his name, there Jesus is present in their midst (cf. Mt. 18:20). In the words of Origen himself, "You will see that he is ready to enlighten your minds."

A long, spiritual martyrdom

Desperately frustrated, spiritually afflicted, and lastly taken prisoner during the new wave of persecutions of the Christians initiated by the Emperor Decius, Origen is bound by heavy chains, tortured with flaming torches; held in an underground prison with his legs clamped in blocks of wood. He is rejoicing at last at the prospect of dying a martyr's death. But it was not to be. The judge withheld the final coup-de-grace!

The judge felt that such a well-known and brilliant personage, who had taught so many catechumens to die as martyrs for Christ, should himself be driven to deny the same Christ!

In the end this last persecution cheated both Origen and the judge.

Weakened by his sufferings Origen died a short time ago.

God had chosen for him a special martyrdom—a long, spiritual martyrdom. □

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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